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Stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS

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Abstract

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Stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS

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Introduction

At the threshold of a new millennium, the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic is still one of the biggest health and development challenges the world has ever experienced because as UNAIDS has noted this disease is unique in its devastating impact on the social, economic and demographic foundations of development¹. The estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS was 38.6 million in 2005². Furthermore, People newly infected with HIV and AIDS deaths in 2005 were 4.1 and 2.8 million respectively².

According to several studies, stigma and discrimination still continue to demolish communities' efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS effectively. Whilst a supportive social environment plays a crucial role for HIV prevention and care programs to combat HIV/AIDS effectively, fear of discrimination has frequently been mentioned as one of the reasons for not taking voluntary HIV testing, disclosing the HIV infection, and not seeking treatment and care. Moreover, HIV-related stigma is associated with psychological and social distress, which can hinder coping, adjustment, and management of HIV disease because learning of a positive HIV test can impose a host of psychological and social stresses on individuals. For instance, they are pushed to use protection rules and not to disclose rather than taking the chance of opening their privacy boundary and gambling on further humiliation and hurt due to stigma and discrimination.

The issues of stigma, discrimination and denial have been poorly understood and often marginalized within national and international responses as the world have struggled to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic after twenty five years. Stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS are complex issue and simply providing accurate information about HIV/AIDS cannot combat HIV epidemic sufficiently^{3,4}. The current research is an attempt to understand the complexities of public reaction to HIV/AIDS in which how stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS are understood within Iranian community living in Sydney with respect to the functional approach to attitudes.

Method

Total of 200 eligible respondents are currently recruiting for the purpose of this study. Eligible respondents in this research are all adult people aged 20-65 from Iranian community living in Sydney metropolitan area. A quantitative research technique is conducted in this research. All data are gathered via a questionnaire which includes demographic and socio-economic background of respondents, HIV/AIDS knowledge, perceived susceptibility, perceived stigma and discrimination; attitudes toward HIV infected people and AFI scale to categorize respondents into two instrumental and symbolic groups. Multivariate techniques are currently used to collect eligible respondents such as snowball sampling techniques, contact with Iranian community organisations, attend in related social and cultural events, contact with the leaders and advertise research in Iranian Newspapers and radio stations.

Results

Data collection has not completed yet. Some of the preliminary findings of the data will be presented at the conference. The focus will be on socio-demographic background and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS among Iranian living in Sydney.

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